

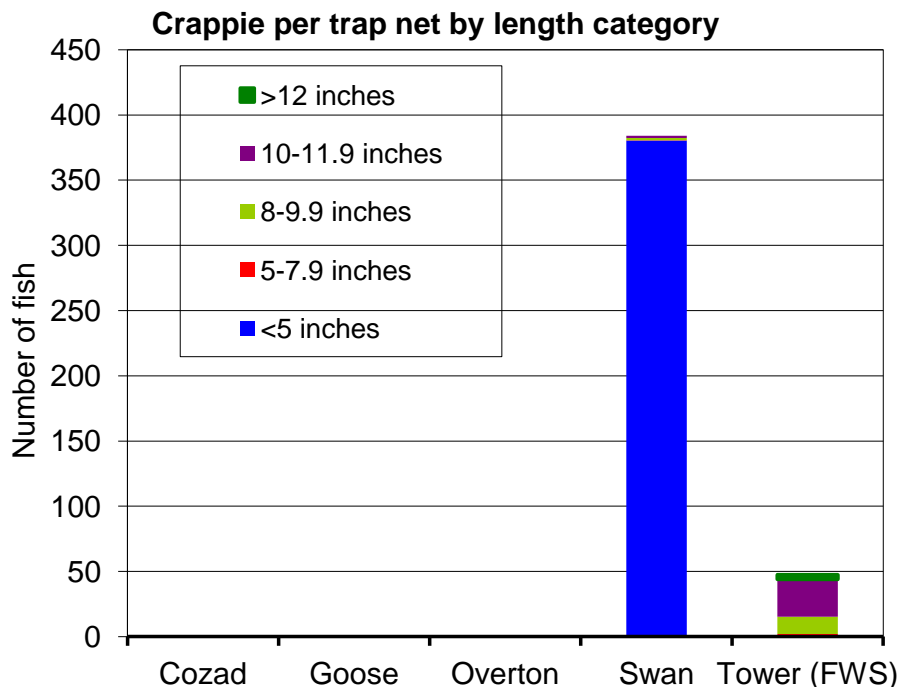
2011 Survey Summary Sandhill Lakes Northeast Region

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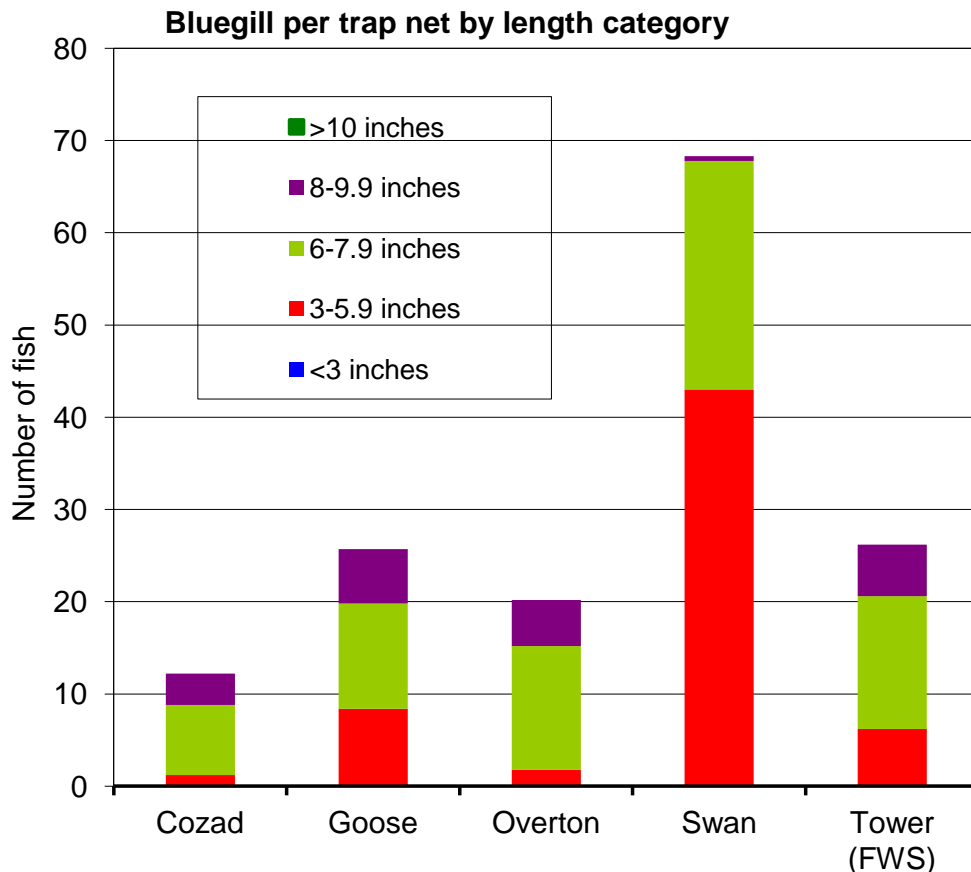


This summary pertains to those Sandhill Lakes located in the Northeast Region that were surveyed in 2011. Panfish species and northern pike are sampled in the spring with trap nets while bass are sampled at night with electrofishing gear. Not all lakes are surveyed annually. Sandhill lakes are naturally formed, typically shallow, and spring fed. These lakes are very productive and well suited to species such as black crappie, bluegill, largemouth bass, northern pike and yellow perch. Growth rates for panfish in these systems are usually above average. Current regulations include an aggregate 15 fish daily bag limit on panfish. This includes the combination of popular panfish species such as bluegill, perch, and crappie. Average to above average precipitation since 2008 in this region has lead to seasonally high water levels in most of these drainages, this is excellent for lake habitat but can allow carp to regain access. **Anglers must be very careful not to move unwanted or destructive species from one system to another.**

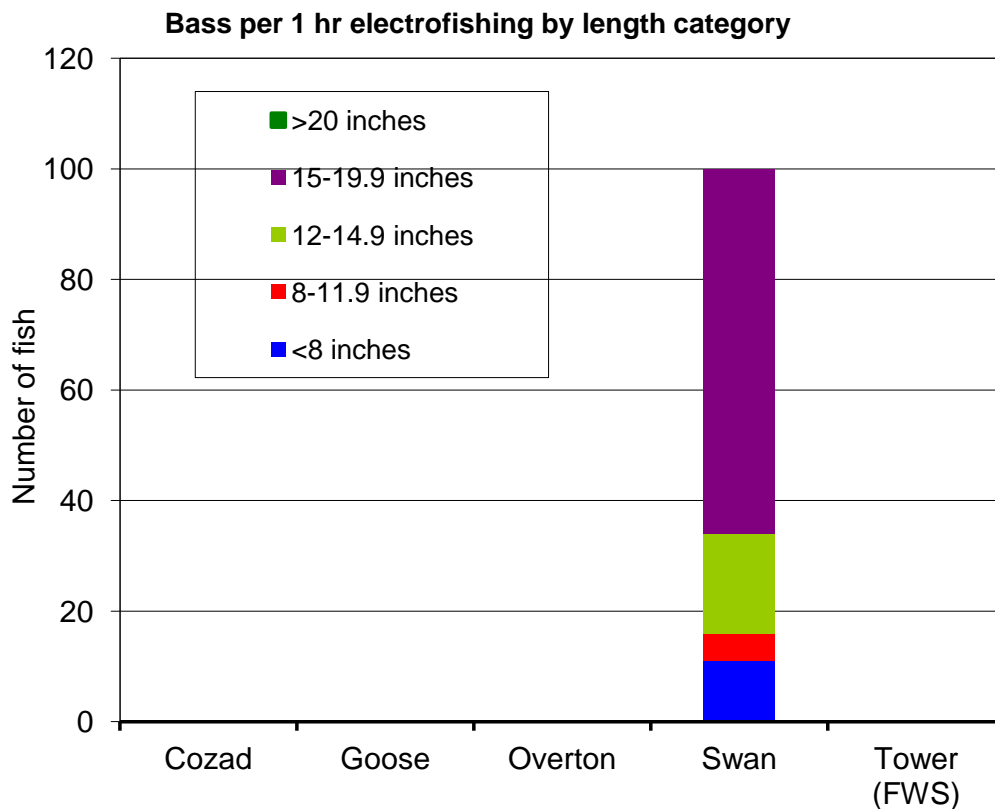
Black Crappie in sandhill lakes are known to grow to trophy sizes even in the presence of carp. They are a favorite for ice fisherman, but can be targeted during open water as well. In Swan Lake, the crappie < 5" were black while the larger sizes were white crappie. These fish should provide excellent opportunity in the next few years. Over 60% of the fish sampled at Tower Lake were 10+ inches. Cozad, Goose and Overton lakes do not have crappie.



BLUEGILL are targeted year-round by anglers in these shallow lakes. They are found in almost all sandhill lakes across the state and most of those can produce Master Angler size fish. Shallow lakes with good water clarity can experience heavy vegetation growth during the summer and anglers must use techniques to fish in and around this vegetation. In many sandhill lakes harvest is highest through the ice. All of these lakes have fish in excess of 8 inches and should provide anglers good opportunities in 2012.

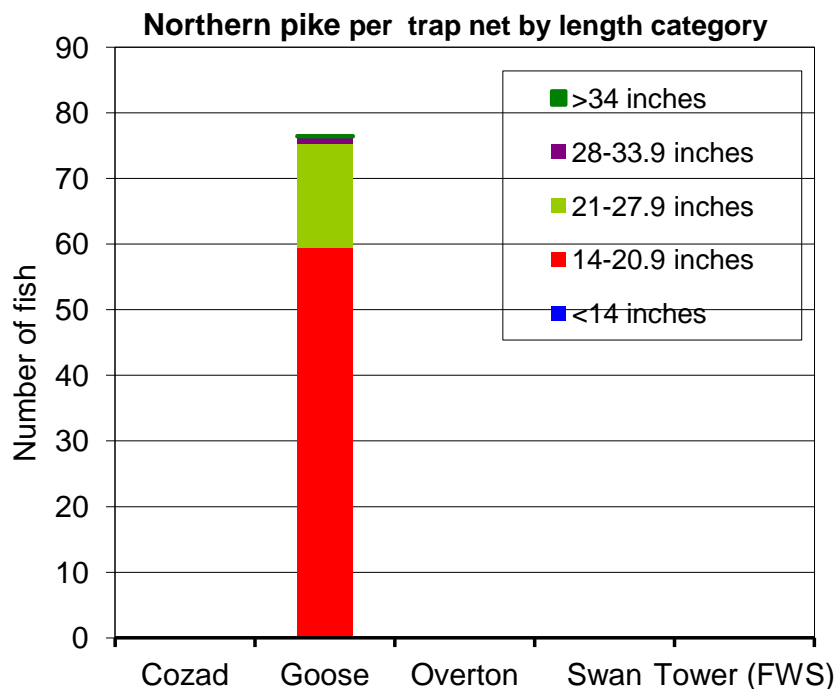


Largemouth bass are the primary predator in most sandhill lakes. The health of the bass population is a primary factor for providing quality panfish to anglers. High bass densities help to control panfish populations when they are small allowing good growth for the remaining fish. Most angling pressure occurs during open water and vegetation can be a challenge, or blessing for catching big bass. Good bass populations are present in all the lakes listed below but only surveyed in Swan last year, the others will be sampled in 2012. Over 65% of the bass sampled at Swan were 15+ inches.



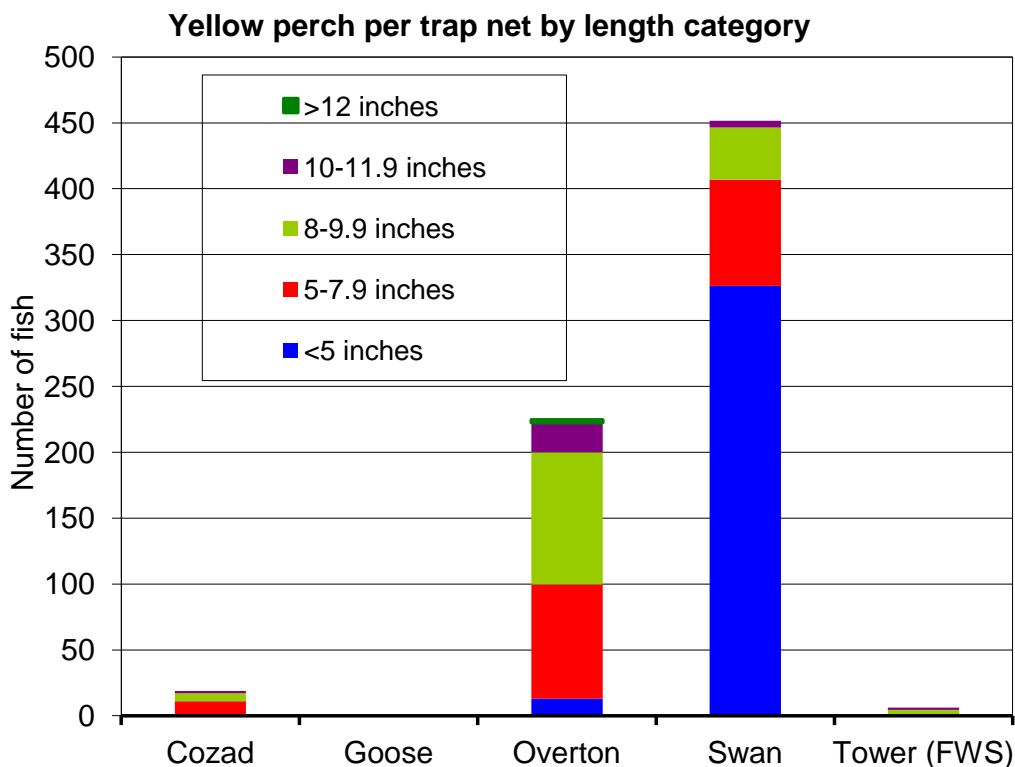


Northern pike can grow to extremely large sizes in some water-bodies, but only rarely exceed 15 lbs in most sandhill lakes. These shallow lakes have very high summer water temperatures and this limits growth. Nebraska's sandhill lakes are nearly the southern extreme for self-sustaining northern pike populations. Pike are found in selected sandhill lakes where they satisfy angler demand and help control common carp populations. Pike are an excellent fighting fish, open water or through the ice, and are hard to beat on the table if time is taken to remove their Y-bones. Sites can be found on YouTube that instruct how to remove Y-bones. Goose is the only lake below that has a pike population and it is managed with a 28-34 inch protected slot length limit. The slot limit allows for harvest of smaller pike while those best suited for carp predation remain protected and in the lake. While northern pike angling opportunities are limited in eastern sandhill lakes, the Valentine Refuge Lakes and Merritt Reservoir offer additional opportunity.





Yellow perch are an ice angler favorite and commonly grow to jumbo sizes in these productive lakes. This species can be targeted on both open and frozen water but can be difficult to find mid-summer with heavy stands of aquatic vegetation. It is this very habitat that enables some of this species to grow to 12 plus inches. Perch can be found in most sandhill lakes across the state. Overton and Swan are currently providing the best opportunities, but perch over 8 inches can be found at Cozad and Tower as well.



Common Carp

Common carp find their way into many Sandhill Lakes and will degrade water quality, destroy aquatic vegetation, and out-compete more desirable sport fish when carp densities are high. Much time and fishermen's money is spent controlling, eliminating and preventing carp from entering Game and Parks managed lakes. In the Northeast Region, common carp are found in Twin Lakes WMA, Goose Lake WMA, Willow Lake WMA, and Long Lake SRA to name a few. Carp re-entered Goose Lake in 2008 and 2010 but are found in low numbers at this time and are not having an effect on the sport fish populations. Renovations are pending at Willow Lake and Clear Lake in Brown County and Twin Lakes in Rock County when water conditions allow. Drought years are the best time to renovate sandhill lakes when water is out of the cattail and marsh areas to insure a complete kill on carp. A dike and outlet/carp barrier project at Willow Lake is scheduled to be completed in 2012.



Goose Lake carp barrier



Swan Lake carp barrier

Access for these sandhill lakes vary due to ownership. Cozad and Goose are property of the State of Nebraska and are managed under Wildlife Management Area regulations. Tower Lake is part of Yellowthroat WMA and is owned by the Fish and Wildlife Service. Overton and Swan are privately owned lakes with public fishing agreements.

Access	Cozad	Goose	Overton	Swan	Tower
Bank/Wading	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES
Boat	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES
Daytime Only	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES
Ice Fishing Only	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO
Modern Boat Ramp	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
Primitive Boat Ramp	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES

Check the Boating Guide for details:

<http://outdoornebraska.ne.gov/boating/pdfs/boatguide.pdf>

For fishing regulation and public waters information consult the 2011-2012 fishing guide at:

<http://outdoornebraska.ne.gov/Fishing/guides/fishguide/pdf/FishGuide.pdf>

For more information contact the Game and Parks Fisheries staff:

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Please remember that these fishing areas have limited services and no trash pick up. If you pack it in, pack it out, and keep our wild places looking wild!